

MA THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

Public Information Department, 11150 East Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340

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PRESS RELEASE

Alex Katz: Nocturnal Paintings

May 31 - August 21, 1988

Dickinson

Six of American artist Alex Katz's most recent works--all large canvases painted in the last two years--receive their first museum showing at The Cleveland Museum of Art. Alex Katz: Nocturnal Paintings, featuring such cityscapes and landscapes as have previously appeared as settings for his portraits, will be on exhibition in Gallery 40 from May 31 through August 21, 1988.

Not only has Katz, known for his billboard-size paintings and witty free-standing cutouts, transformed his settings into provocative subjects, but he has made his latest pictures in the dark colors of evening and night rather than the brisk midday light of the Museum's own Impala. The three large landscape paintings in this show were conceived during the summer of 1987 at his house in Maine. In Full Moon, one of the smaller-scale canvases in the show at 8½ x 9 feet, a bright off-white moon shines from a dusk blue sky through the silhouetted branches and leaves of trees. In East, stretching across twenty-four feet of canvas, even moonlight doesn't pierce rich, mysterious blues and blacks. Sunset is a close-up of a tree against a vivid red background.

Since the early 1970s, Katz has lived in a loft on West Broadway in New York's art district, SOHO. Inspired by a view from the loft, Wet Evening was the earliest of his figureless nocturnal cityscapes, and features warm yellow light glowing through a rain or mist that leaves ornate rooftops in soft focus. Night II is a tall, narrow painting in which windows filled with artificial light define the planes of several buildings in a virtually all-

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black picture. In the pre-dawn scene Soho Morning, a blue-streaked sky--entirely different from the other works in the show--is a tranquil background for the spatially compressed, dynamic architecture.

Born in Brooklyn in 1927, Katz received his initial art training in high school and became interested in commercial art. After graduating in 1949 from Copoper Union Art School in New York, he spent the following two summers at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine, where he was encouraged to paint outdoors, directly from nature. His work has been influenced by numerous historical and modern art styles, and such popular sources as movies, television, comic strips, and advertising. Since the late 1950s he has concentrated on reductive portraiture, especially of his wife (such as in Impala) and son, in larger-than-life, often cropped, figures depicted with limited details, sharply defined contours, and simplified backgrounds.

The works in Alex Katz: Nocturnal Paintings, selected by Curator of Contemporary Art Tom Hinson, have been painted since his highly successful retrospective exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1986. Mr. Hinson characterizes them as "remarkably self-assured and adventurous," as "somber, mysterious canvases [that] are part of the tradition of romantic American painting." The paintings are exhibited courtesy of the Marlborough Gallery in New York; they were first exhibited there and at the Massimo Audiello Gallery in April. Gallery talks will be given by Nancy McAfee of the Museum's Education Department at 1:30 pm on Wednesday, June 22, and Sunday, June 26.

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For more information, photographs, or slides, please contact the Public Information Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.